THE LIONESS WITH THE BROKEN STEMS

Image Before Name: The Couchant Lioness from the Corridor to the 4th Dynasty

Zep Tepi Series — Addendum to The Sphinx Hypothesis
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> *'Es füllte Horus sein leeres Auge mit seinem vollen Auge.' — Horus filled his empty eye with his full eye.* — Pyramid Texts, Utterance 1682 (Junker 1917, p. 139)

Abstract

The Sphinx Hypothesis proposes that the Giza monument was originally called Mehit. That rests on a question of a different order from the geology and chronology of the main paper: how does an unnamed image acquire a name, and when?

The subject is the couchant lioness sign — a reclining feline with three or four shafts rising from her back, beside the reed shrine of Upper Egypt — attested on cylinder seals under Horus Aha and Horus Djer, reduced to a single shaft with the axe by the Third Dynasty in the title ḥqꜣ Mḥyt, borne at Giza by Wepemnefret. Its excavator wrote in 1939 that it 'so far has no explanation'. Weill supplied one in 1961 which appears to have gone unremarked since, reading the group as a phonetic writing of mr.tj, 'he of the reed chapels', and stating that no lioness bears that name. Wilkinson reads the same sealing as Mehit, and Reader, working from the geology, identifies the same sign on the Hesy-Ra panel. Two readings of one object, with no adjudication; both are set out here.

The corridor carries the feline at every node for which imagery survives, and carries it **active** — hunting, confronted, composite. What it does not carry is the couchant guardian, likewise absent from the Predynastic standard forms and the Naqada I–II repertoire. This is read as a sequence rather than a gap: the active feline of a population in motion, and the couchant guardian once the movement ended at the Nile. Egypt itself writes the two lions as **different signs**, the recumbent one carrying rwty, the Two-lion-god, and rwyt, 'gate', so the distinction of posture is lexical rather than imposed; and the Round Head painters of the Tassili rendered their prey animals static while rendering felines active, so posture is a choice about the animal rather than a convention of style.

On the name, Junker reached in 1917 the reading followed here: Mḥ.t is die Volle, the Full One, and can refer only to the full Eye of Horus — the stolen Eye — as the Inj of her companion Onuris refers to its return. Kuper and Hendrickx deny a demonstrable link between far-desert imagery and Nile Valley concepts in the fourth millennium; the reading offered here does not require what they deny. Set beside the other corridor fauna the lioness proves unexceptional: cattle become Bat, crocodile Sobek, the standing lion Mafdet and the recumbent lion Mehit. What survives is a pattern rather than a lineage: image precedes name in every case where both can be dated, and on that pattern the Mehit identification is not a special claim but an ordinary one.

Keywords: Mehit; Mafdet; couchant lioness; Great Sphinx of Giza; ḥqꜣ Mḥyt; Wepemnefret; Early Dynastic Egypt; Hierakonpolis; Thinis; Predynastic iconography; Saharan corridor; Saharan rock art; Shemsu Hor; Zep Tepi; Gardiner sign list

Author's Note

This is an addendum to The Sphinx Hypothesis and is deposited with it. It is not a separate paper and does not restate that paper's case. It exists because the onomastic and iconographic material grew past the room the main text could give it, and because the question it treats — how an unnamed image acquires a name — is of a different order from the geology and chronology that paper argues.

It draws on two earlier papers in the series and does not re-argue them. **Paper II, The Wedjat Hypothesis**, supplies the cosmological framework within which the Eye and its restoration are read, and its ¼ fraction is the value invoked here. **Paper III, The Shemsu Hor Hypothesis** (Zenodo DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21381860), establishes the corridor population and the Hierakonpolis integration site, Node 7, on which the geographical argument depends; its table of animals held captive and buried at HK6 is the complementary body of evidence to the corridor survey presented below. Readers assessing whether the Shemsu Hor constitute an archaeologically grounded population should consult Paper III; that is its domain, not this addendum's.

Where this addendum reaches conclusions that qualify the main paper, it says so. Weill's mr.tj reading of the shafted sign, set out below, cuts against a use of that sign the earlier sections make, and the correction is stated rather than absorbed. The subtitle of the main paper was changed in consequence of Junker's reading of the name, and that change is recorded here.

Sources are marked throughout for what has been read and what has not. Fifteen references are flagged as not consulted directly. Two specialist objections to the corridor argument are quoted in full and are not answered.

A note of thanks. This addendum exists because of a correspondence. Colin D. Reader, whose geological work on the Sphinx enclosure first opened the question this series takes up, wrote to me and then kept writing — not as a specialist correcting an amateur, but as one reader of the evidence to another. He gave references I did not have, took my arguments seriously enough to disagree with them properly, and corrected me where I was wrong without ever making the correction the point. The path that led from his Figure 13.5 to Emery, to Weill, and finally to Junker was one I would not have found alone, and would not have walked at all had he not treated me as an equal from the first letter. Whatever is right in these pages owes something to him; what is wrong in them is mine.

For Colin — with thanks, and with the hope that the shafts turn out to be counting something.

The Question This Addendum Answers

A name is not the first thing a god has. It is close to the last.

The corridor populations of the Zep Tepi model moved through the Sahara for millennia without writing. Whatever they carried — images, roles, ritual forms — they carried unnamed, because naming in the sense that concerns Egyptology requires script, and script arrives in the Nile Valley at the threshold of unification. The corridor does not name anything, because there was no written language until unification.

This has a consequence that is easy to state and easy to forget. If a deity's image travels and her name is minted later, then the absence of her name from the earlier record is not evidence against her antiquity. It is what the model predicts. The test cannot be 'when is she first named'.

It has to be ‘when is her image first diagnosable, and does the naming, when it comes, attach to that image’.

That test has a precedent in the discipline, and it is worth setting out before anything else.

The Precedent: How Bat Was Named

Before 1962, every Predynastic bovine face in Egyptian art was called Hathor. Henry George Fischer showed they were not. In ‘The cult and nome of the goddess Bat’ (Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 1, 1962, 7–24) he separated an earlier, distinct goddess from her later successor, and he did it on the form of the emblem alone: a frontal human face with bovine ears and inward-curving horns of the specific cattle type the Egyptians first herded.

None of the objects Fischer reassigned carried an inscription naming Bat. The name comes from later texts. The bridge is the diagnostic form.

This is now standard practice. Hendrickx identifies the emblem at Hierakonpolis Tomb 16, of Naqada IC–IIA, as Bat on the same grounds — five centuries before writing (Hendrickx 2005). The chain behind it is documented: the bull’s-head amulet, which Hendrickx, Förster and Eyckerman describe as probably the most frequent iconographic motif down to the end of Naqada II, whose characteristics are integrated into the Bat emblem.

So the method is legitimate. The question is only whether a given diagnostic is tight enough to carry it. Bat’s is: a frontal face with inward-curving horns occurs nowhere else. A reclining lioness, by contrast, is what lions do. If the couchant lioness sign is to be diagnosable in Fischer’s sense, the diagnostic element cannot be the animal. It has to be the shafts.

What the Sign Actually Is

The primary description is Emery’s, from the publication of the Saqqara tomb of Hor-Aha (Hor-Aha: Excavations at Saqqara 1937–1938, Cairo 1939). Describing seal impression No. 9 and those following it:

> *The predominant feature of this seal and of those that follow (Nos. 10 to 16) is a trellis-work shrine with a lioness in front of it, from the back of which protrude three bent bars… The lioness with the bent bars is a sign that so far has no explanation.*

Three elements, then: the shrine, the lioness, the shafts. Emery identifies the shrine without hesitation as the pr-wr, ‘the “Great House” which was the name of the national shrine of Upper Egypt at Hierakonpolis’, and Wilkinson follows him. That identification is not unanimous, and the dissent comes from the same source relied on below for the reading of the shafts. Weill holds, at his p. 45, that the name of the chapelle en clayonnage is ‘un nom qui ne se confond pas avec la désignation particulière du pr wr, le sanctuaire horien du Sud, dont la représentation est celle d’une chapelle de ce même modèle’ — the same architectural model, on his account, but not the same name and not the same structure. His own next sentence shows what he does with the difficulty: ‘Pour le moment, évitant la question de cette lecture, nous dirons simplement le temple.’ He suspends the identification rather than settling it against Emery, and the suspension should be reported as such. The phrase ‘beside the pr-wr’ is used throughout this study on the authority of three readers of the material rather than one. Emery identifies the shrine so in publishing the seals; Wilkinson repeats the identification in cataloguing the sign; and Smith, describing the Wepemnefret lioness, writes that ‘a similar form of the lioness appears on Early

Dynastic seal designs, where she is obviously connected with the Upper Egyptian Sanctuary' (1963, p. 12) — reaching the same connection from the Giza material rather than from the cylinders. Against those three stands Weill's suspension, which is a refusal to decide rather than a denial. The usage is retained here on that balance, and the reader should know both that it rests on a majority and that the majority is not unanimous.

The sign's distribution in Emery's catalogue runs across Saqqara, Naqada and Abydos. It appears on a sealing of the reign of Djer from Abydos (Petrie, Royal Tombs II, pl. XVI, nos. 114 –117), on the panels of Hesy, on a fragment from the Tomb of Meri in the Louvre, and on a cylinder seal found in Palestine. **It does not appear under Narmer.**

Weill, describing the same group, calls it la lionne au faisceau de tiges brisées — the lioness with the bundle of broken stems — and specifies 'l'implantation dans le dos du fauve de trois hampes verticales', the implantation in the beast's back of three vertical shafts (Weill 1961). He also names her directly: la Lionne de Hiérakonpolis, and notes a pioche, a pick, attached at the foot of her shaft.

Weill made those stems the material of a reed chapel and the whole group a builder's title; that reading is set out in full below. Emery's 1939 verdict was therefore overtaken in 1961, though the fact does not appear to have been noticed.

The Sign Evolves

Emery tracked the change, and it is the most useful thing in his account:

> *All First Dynasty examples have three or four bars, but the later form shows one only… In all later examples, notably on the panels of Hesy, and a fragment from the Tomb of Meri in the Louvre, the lioness is shown with only one bar and always in conjunction with the axe.*

Three or four shafts in Dynasty I; one shaft by Dynasty III; and from that point the lioness appears in fixed combination with the axe.

That terminal form is the sign of the title. William Stevenson Smith, publishing the slab stela of Wepemnefret from Giza, describes the prince's second title as an axe above a lioness, and renders it: 'Craftsman of Mehit (the lioness goddess of the Thinite Nome). A similar form of the lioness appears on Early Dynastic seal designs, where she is obviously connected with the Upper Egyptian Sanctuary' (Smith 1963, p. 12).

Smith reached that reading from the Giza material; Weill, working from the archaic cylinders, recorded ḥqꜣ Mḥyt as attested in the Third and Fourth Dynasties. Smith's 1963 rendering of the axe-above-lioness as 'Craftsman of Mehit' is not the reading followed here: Der Manuelian's index records the two words on the stela as separate entries, and that separation is adopted below. What the two scholars establish between them, two bodies of evidence and two years apart, is that the goddess's name stands in Third and Fourth Dynasty titulary at Giza and on the archaic seals alike — and Smith's account of which men bear which title turns out, as the later section shows, to corroborate the separation rather than to blur it.

Smith adds a detail that has not been followed up: 'The Vizier Hemiunu bears the same pair of titles as does Wepemnofret' (1963, p. 12). The pair he means is identified in the same paragraph: the first title, read as Overseer of Royal Scribes or Royal Architect and Scribe, together with 'the second title which consists of an axe above a lioness' — the axe-title quoted

above. It is therefore the archaic axe-title that Hemiunu shares, and not ḥqꜣ Mḥyt, which stands as a separate entry in the titulary.

The Cylinders in Detail

The Attestation. The Mehit name is attested on seal impressions of Horus-Narmer and Horus-Djer (late 31st century BCE); Weill (1961, pp. 92–95) independently catalogues the same group of archaic cylinders and extends it to the reign of Horus Aha, citing three cylinders from Saqqara published by Emery (1939, figs. 22, 23, 28) alongside the Abydos examples; the goddess is also named in a priestly title on the slab stela of the king's son Wepemnefret (Giza G 1201). William Stevenson Smith (1963, Archaeology 16, pp. 2–13) first published this stela.

Weill's Independent Record. Weill, writing independently in 1961, records the same title from the same period — 'le titre ḥqꜣ Mḥj·t des IIIe et IVe dynasties' — which places two unconnected readings of a Mehit priestly title in Dynasties 3 and 4.

Weill on the Cylinder Figure. Weill also analyses the figure that accompanies the chapel on these cylinders, and his treatment requires care. He describes the animal as a couchant lioness, tail extended behind her or slightly curled, and assigns it to the sign-type that writes several goddess names, listing first 'le Mḥj-t de This et de Sebennytos (dans le titre ḥqꜣ Mḥj·t des IIIe et IVe dynasties)', then the Mɐtj·t of Deir el-Gebrawi, the Pɐḏ·t of Speos Artemidos and a certain Mn·t. He then argues that lioness and chapel are, in his own italics, 'graphiquement' the same thing: the sign-composers, unable to stack the chapel on the animal's back or seat the animal on its sloping roof, fused the two by letting the drawn roofline follow the drawn spine. On his reading the lioness functions as a phonetic spelling the chapel's name, and he offers as verification that cylinder h carries the chisel sign mr twice above the lioness's head. Four qualifications are recorded here, the first two from direct inspection of Weill's own plate. In the six specimens he reproduces on his p. 91, the animal and the chapel read as two adjacent signs rather than one merged figure, and the fusion he describes is not evident in the two examples he cites for it; it is, however, clearly present in the El-Kab graffito he reproduces alongside (his figure k, after P.S.B.A. XXV, 1903, p. 371 and Capart, Les débuts de l'art, p. 215), where the wattle striations terminate in a pointed muzzle at one end and a raised tail at the other. Second, the animal is unambiguously couchant in five of the six specimens and unambiguously leonine in the largest of them. Third, Weill nowhere claims that any building was constructed in this form and cites no excavated example; his subject throughout is the composition of a hieroglyphic group, so no architectural precedent for a monumental couchant lion can be drawn from him in either direction. Fourth, the homophony underpinning the fusion is his own reconstruction, and he says so: 'On ne connaît point de lionne ainsi appelée', no lioness being attested under the name mr·t, with the derivation from mrj·t to mɐj·t proposed on the analogy of Erman's grammar. The study is also of 1961 and has not been checked here against subsequent scholarship. What the cylinders establish, and what is used here, is that a couchant lioness of the sign-type Weill assigns first to Mehit of Thinis and Sebennytos was current in royal contexts under Aha and Djer — his specimens include three cylinders from Saqqara of Aha's reign published by Emery (1939, figs. 22, 23, 28), one of Djer's from Abydos, the Abydos ebony cylinder, and fragmentary impressions from Naqada — and that a priestly title in that goddess's name is attested into the Third and Fourth Dynasties.

Early Dynastic Attestation. Mehit is independently attested in the Early Dynastic period as a reclining lioness appearing on numerous sealings and ivory artifacts (Wilkinson 1999, Early Dynastic Egypt, Routledge, p. 250, who describes her as a recumbent lioness with three bent poles projecting from her back, occurring on a number of Early Dynastic sealings and always

preceding a depiction of the pr-wr, the archetypal Upper Egyptian shrine, and citing Petrie 1901, pl. XVI.116).

Four Goddesses, One Sign

One matter of priority should be recorded before the evidence is set out. The identification of the monument with Mehit has been proposed before, in non-peer-reviewed venues; the present study does not rely on that work and reaches the identification through the epigraphic route set out below and in the main paper. The identification of the sign is not settled, and the reason is that it was never singular. Weill lists the couchant lioness as the determinative of several goddesses at once:

> *…lionne couchée à la queue allongée derrière elle ou légèrement retroussée, du type de ce même animal lorsqu'il détermine les noms de diverses déesses connues par ailleurs — le Mḥj-t de This et de Sebennytos (dans G I le titre ḥkā Mḥj-t des IIIe et IVe dynasties), la Mātj-t de Deir el Gebrawi, la Pḫt de Speos Artemidos, une certaine Mn-t encore…*

Mehit of Thinis and Sebennytos. Matit of Deir el-Gebrawi. Pakhet of Speos Artemidos. And a certain Mnt. **One sign, four names, four cult centres.**

This resolves an apparent conflict in the literature. Emery, writing in 1939, reports that 'Raymond Weill… identifies the lioness with the bent bar with the goddess Matit', citing Weill's Les IIe et IIIe Dynasties (1908) and Monuments nouveaux des premières dynasties (Sphinx XV). By 1961 Weill names Mehit first and lists Matit as one of several others. The identification was revised across half a century by the scholar who made it.

Mafdet stands apart, and the distinction matters. Weill describes her as a panthère, consort of the clawed falcon at Antaeopolis in the Twelfth Upper Egyptian nome, redoubtable for her claws, citing Pyr. 1212, 677 and 440. She is named under Den, in a Palermo Stone year-entry recording the dedication of an image. Her character in the sources is active and judicial where the couchant lioness is static and architectural: on the Den vase Mafdet surmounts the edifice, perched on its roof as its Lady; the chapel-lioness of the Aha and Djer cylinders lies beside the structure.

Active and couchant are not two renderings of one goddess. They are two different things the sources keep apart.

Distinguishing Mafdet

Weill on Mafdet. Weill's volume bears on the alternative identification as well, and on one point it supports it. At his p. 347 he discusses a crystal vase of the reign of Den, reconstructed from two fragments recovered in the Abydos tombs, which carries 'l'image de la lionne Mꜥfd·t, avec son nom, perchée sur le toit d'une sorte d'édifice', the whole to be read 'Mꜥfd·t, Dame du Château de Vie' — Mafdet, Lady of the Mansion of Life. His source for it is Petrie, Royal Tombs I, pl. VII.4 and II, pl. VII.10, the latter being the plate on which Reader (2026) rests his own identification of Mafdet as a lioness in this period. Weill's reading independently confirms it: the animal is leonine, it is named, and the date is Den's reign. Weill also describes her, as Reader does, as obscure. The two figures are nonetheless distinct in their relation to architecture, and the distinction is visible in the originals.

Mafdet and the Den Vase. Mafdet on the Den vase surmounts the edifice, perched on its roof as its Lady. The chapel-lioness of the Aha and Djer cylinders lies beside the structure and serves, on Weill's reading, to spell its name. Elsewhere Weill records Mafdet holding a sceptre in one paw on an enamelled plaque from Abydos, grouping that image with figurations of armed animals. Nothing here settles the identification of the Great Sphinx, which Weill does not discuss; but it does indicate that in the First Dynasty the two lioness figures were deployed differently, the one active and surmounting, the other couchant and adjacent.

The Junker and de Wit Dispute. Junker held that the lion on Wepemnefret's stela wears a collar and is therefore domesticated, and that it is certainly not a lioness; studying the animal before the pr-wr he concluded that it cannot be mḥtjt, while asking whether the goddess mḥ.t might serve (Gîza I, 149–150, reported at de Wit 1951, p. 194). De Wit sets against this the writing of the sign in the Hesy-Ra mastaba with a final -t, which he calls an argument in favour of the lioness, and declines to decide between them, concluding only that a lion or lioness was attached to the Upper Egyptian sanctuary and that a lion cult therefore existed at that early date (1951, pp. 194–195). De Wit reports the stela as naming a 'prophète d'Horus et de Mehit', citing Klebs and Kees (de Wit 1951, p. 301); Der Manuelian's reading separates two distinct titles which that older rendering had run together — ḥm-nṯr Ḥr mḥty, 'priest of the northern Horus', in which mḥty is the ordinary word for 'northern', and ḥkꜣ Mḥyt, 'heka-priest of Mehyt', in which Mḥyt is the divine name.

The Desert-Margin Lionesses. He further describes her as one of the ancient lionesses of the desert margin bearing the epithet 'à la tête de la Vallée', at the head of the Valley, and suggests — tentatively, in his own words 'il est possible que' — that such a goddess may have been venerated by desert nomads (de Wit 1951, p. 300). De Wit sets this within a wider pattern of lioness deities sited at almost every major wadi mouth, titled mistress of the Valley, of the mouth of the Valley, of the two mountains, or of the western wadi, a pattern he judges to reach back for the most part to prehistory (de Wit 1951, pp. 286–287, citing Kees).

The Title Ḥqā Mḥyt and Its Holders

Wepemnefret's Titulary. Der Manuelian's corpus publication gives Wepemnefret fourteen titles across four lines, among them commander of the king's scribes, priest of Seshat foremost of the archive(s) of the keeper of the king's property, priest of the souls of Pe, priest of the northern Horus, priest of Anubis, overseer of fishers, great one of the Tens of Upper Egypt, priest of Heqet, ḫt-priest of Ha(?), and king's son. Ninth in that sequence stands ḥkꜣ Mḥyt, which he renders 'heka-priest of Mehyt' without hedge or query (2003, p. 32); second in the sequence stands a further archaic title written with a lioness sign, discussed below. The Giza evidence is precisely bounded. In Der Manuelian's index of titles, ḥkꜣ Mḥyt is recorded for Wepemnefret at G 1201 and for no other stela in the corpus; in his index of words, the divine name Mḥyt occurs once in the entire slab-stelae corpus, at G 1201. One occurrence, one man, one tomb: that is the extent of the goddess's attestation in the Giza slab stelae, and the claim made here rests on nothing more.

Klebs, Kees and the Two Titles. Der Manuelian's index records both words on the stela as separate entries. The modern reading is therefore the one adopted here. The two modern counts of holders are not counts of the same title, and the distinction matters.

Two Counts of Title-Holders. Der Manuelian attributes to Kaplony the observation that ḥkꜣ Mḥyt is borne only by Wepemnefret and by Neferseshemre (IÄF 1, p. 582 (2), reported at Der Manuelian 2003, p. 32 n. 9). De Wit's longer list belongs to the archaic title instead: he records it — noting that it is rare — in the inscriptions of Ḥsj-Rʿ, Nrjj, Sḫtw, Wp-m-nfr.t, Nfr-sšm-Rʿ, Ḥm-

Iwnw and Ttw (1951, p. 195), seven holders including Hesy-Ra and Hemiunu, and glosses the word mḏḥ in the sentence immediately following, which fixes which title he is enumerating. The two lists are therefore not in tension; they count different things, and the heka-priesthood of Mehyt remains the narrower of the two. Smith's publication of the stela corroborates that division independently. He describes the second title as an axe above a lioness, renders it 'Craftsman of Mehit (the lioness goddess of the Thinite Nome)', and records that the Vizier Hemiunu bears the same pair of titles as Wepemnefret (1963, p. 12). Hemiunu appears on de Wit's list and not on Kaplony's, which is what the separation of the two titles predicts. Smith also sets out the scholarship on the axe sign itself: Helck and Junker both read it as meaning something like 'overseer' when combined with Royal Scribe, while Lacau, discussing the craftsmen's titles on the Step Pyramid stone vessels, takes it in the Second Dynasty as 'carpenter' read separately. Smith accepts the 'overseer' reading for the later Old Kingdom but judges it less likely for the Fourth Dynasty. The title is therefore contested in its ordinary meaning as well as in its divine element, and no weight is placed here on any single rendering. One point of contact between them should nonetheless be recorded. De Wit's authority for Nfr-sšm-Rʿ is Montet, Kêmi I, p. 84 — the same publication Der Manuelian cites for Neferseshemre as second holder of ḥkꜣ Mḥyt. Whether that reflects one man holding both titles or a single attestation read two ways cannot be settled without Kaplony's own text, which has not been consulted here.

A Further Attestation and a Caution. A further attestation should be kept apart from both lists: at his p. 301 de Wit records a dignitary in Mariette's Mastabas (D.19, p. 228; with Kees, Horus und Seth II, 73) bearing what he renders 'prophète d'Horus et de Mehit'. That is the conflated older reading which Der Manuelian's separation of ḥm-nṯr Ḥr mḥty from ḥkꜣ Mḥyt supersedes, and no weight is placed on it here. De Wit also enters a caution against reading the title too confidently: mḏḥ means to work by means of the axe, from which the title has been rendered 'architect of the lion sanctuary', but forms such as mḏḥ of the king's scribes exist, so on his assessment the title itself settles nothing. The standard reference-work treatment of the goddess is Kákosy, 'Mehit', in Lexikon der Ägyptologie 4, cols. 5–6. This confirms Mehit by name in an Old Kingdom Giza priestly title — though it establishes only that the goddess was invoked in such titles, not that any specific physical monument at Giza is being referenced.

Status of the Identification. The identification of the Sphinx as Mehit rests on the convergence of her reclining lioness form, her Wedjat-restoration mythology, and her corridor cult geography. The Mehit identification is presented here as the best-supported current candidate for the monument's original name — not as a resolved identification. Mainstream Egyptology independently confirms Mehit's Early Dynastic attestation: she appears in numerous early dynastic sealings and ivory artefacts and is characterised by Toby Wilkinson as, in Early Dynastic times, a protector goddess associated with holy places (Wilkinson, T.A.H. 1999, Early Dynastic Egypt, Routledge, p. 250).

Independent Convergence: Reader on the Hesy-Ra Panel

The identification proposed here has been reached independently, from a different direction, by a scholar working on the Sphinx from the geology.

In Rewriting the History of the Great Sphinx, Colin Reader captions a photograph of one of the wooden panels from the Third Dynasty tomb of Hesy-Ra at Saqqara (Egyptian Museum CG 1428):

> *The lion to the left is depicted with a vertical but crooked upright feature, rising from the animal's back. This and the position of the tail, suggest this may be the obscure lion deity, Mehit.*

Reader reaches Mehit from the image alone, and calls her obscure. The material set out above supplies what that reading is missing.

The Hesy-Ra panels are the object Emery singled out as showing the reduced form: 'the later form shows one only… notably on the panels of Hesy… and always in conjunction with the axe'. Reader's single crooked upright is therefore not an isolated oddity but the last survivor of Weill's trois hampes verticales, at the end of a reduction its excavator tracked from the First Dynasty.

The obscure deity, further, has a name, a title and a cult geography: Weill records Mḥyt of Thinis and Sebennytos, and the title ḥqꜣ Mḥyt attested in the Third and Fourth Dynasties. And the sign reaches Giza — Smith reads the same axe-and-lioness combination on Wepemnefret's slab stela, in Khufu's court, with Hemiunu bearing the same pair of titles.

Reader's own separation of the two lionesses is also supported from this direction. His Figure 13.9 shows Mafdet on a tall vertical standard, accompanied by a knife, on an alabaster jar fragment of the reign of Den. Weill has Mafdet surmounting the edifice on the Den vase, and the chapel-lioness lying beside the structure. Mafdet stands on a standard; Mehit carries shafts in her back. The two are distinguished in the sources by their relation to architecture, and both readings arrive at that distinction independently.

Two Lines of Enquiry into the Shafts

Emery wrote in 1939 that the lioness with the bent bars 'so far has no explanation'. That verdict was overtaken in 1961, by a reading set out below which appears to have gone unremarked since. What follows records two lines of enquiry into the shafts and then Weill's own account of them, which is the standing explanation and is not a reading of the sign as a goddess.

A Convergence in Descriptive Language

Weill describes Mehit's shafts as a **faisceau de tiges brisées** — a bundle of broken stems — and specifies three vertical shafts implanted in the animal's back.

Two authorities describe the djed pillar in closely similar terms. Faulkner renders it 'a cult object resembling a tree trunk with lopped-off horizontal branches, sacred to Osiris, Ptah and Sokar'. Gardiner reads it as 'a column imitating a bundle of stalks tied together'. Lurker proposed a pole, with fertility associations, around which grain was tied.

A third description belongs to the same family. Hendrickx, reconstructing Neith's bilobate cult-sign from the Brussels palette, identifies the pole beneath the emblem as a palm trunk, recognisable because it is 'marked with small horizontal lines which are denser towards the top… the marks on the upper part of the tree where the thickly-clustered leaves have been cut away in preparing the pole'.

Broken stems; a trunk with its branches lopped; a bundle of stalks tied together; a palm trunk with the leaves cut away. Four independent descriptions, by four authorities, of what is in each case a **stripped plant prepared as a cult object**.

The chronology permits a comparison. The oldest djed pillars that can be pointed to are two small ivory examples from a First Dynasty tomb at Helwan — the same horizon as the cylinders

of Aha and Djer on which Mehit's shafts appear. The two objects are contemporary in their first attestation, and both are described by their respective specialists as bundles of stripped stems.

This is a convergence in descriptive language, not a demonstrated relationship, and it is offered as no more than that. Mehit's emblem shows three or four separate shafts; the djed is a single column. The djed's horizontal banding may be the same convention Hendrickx identifies as indicating a prepared trunk, or may be unrelated — no one has tested it. What can be said is that the object on the lioness's back belongs, on the description of the scholar who examined it most closely, to a recognised class of Egyptian cult object: the stripped pole. That class had been carrying divine emblems since Naqada II.

A Reading of the Shafts, Offered as a Hypothesis

What follows is a reading that the evidence assembled in this addendum permits, set out with the objections to it and the observations that would test it. It should be read against Weill's own explanation of the shafts, given in the section that follows, which is incompatible with it.

First a matter of translation. Weill's tiges brisées has been rendered above as 'broken stems', but Emery describes the same objects as **bent** bars and Reader as 'a vertical but crooked upright feature'. In French descriptive usage brisé denotes a break of angle rather than of substance. The objects are bent poles, and nothing in what follows requires anything to have been snapped.

Three findings sit together. The shafts belong to a recognised class of object: Gardiner S35 makes the fan of ostrich feathers the ideogram for šwyt, 'standard', and Aksamit records that Predynastic standards have been accepted as symbols of divinities since Steindorff. **Standards marked groups**: Loret read the boat emblems as clan identifiers, Roth as primitive versions of the later phyles. And Emery's sequence is a **reduction** — three or four shafts in the First Dynasty, one by the Third, thereafter joined to the axe.

If each shaft is a standard, and standards marked groups, then a couchant lioness carrying three or four of them beside the national shrine of Upper Egypt is the emblem of a **coalition under one guardian**: several groups, one sanctuary. And the reduction from several shafts to one across three dynasties would track what the early state was demonstrably doing — consolidating a coalition into a single authority.

On the framework proposed in this series, that is the corridor arrival rendered as an emblem. Groups that travelled separately, each with its own standard, arriving at one place and settling under one guardian. **The posture says settled; the shafts say plural; the shrine says where.**

The Objections to It

— **The Narmer standards carry emblems; the shafts appear not to.** The four standard-bearers of the Narmer Palette hold an animal skin, a canid identified with Wepwawet, and two falcons. Mehit's shafts are described by every witness as bare poles. If they are standards, they are standards stripped of their emblems, and no source says why. The numerical agreement between four bearers and four shafts is therefore suggestive at best and may be coincidence.

— **The count is not fixed.** Emery records 'three or four' across First Dynasty examples. A fixed emblem would not vary; a tally might. Until the variation is documented reign by reign, neither reading is preferred.

— **Nothing in the sources connects the shafts to the Followers of Horus.** Kemp's reading of the Narmer standards as the Followers is one interpretation among several — the same standards are also read as nome chiefs, and as the souls of Pe. The connection drawn here between those standards and this sign is made in this paper and nowhere else.

What Would Test It

Two observations would decide between a fixed emblem and a tally, and neither has been made in the course of this study.

— **The shaft count against reign.** If the number of shafts varies systematically between Aha and Djer, the shafts are counting something. If it is constant and the variation is only in how carefully the sign was cut, they are a fixed emblem. The material is in Kaplony 1963, Taf. 40–47, and in Petrie 1901, Royal Tombs II, pl. XVI, nos. 114–117, the latter digitised and freely available.

— **The shafts against the standard corpus.** Aksamit catalogues twenty-eight forms of Predynastic standard, drawn rather than named in her published text. If any of the shafts on the lioness resembles a form in that corpus, the identification is made. If none does, the reading fails and the shafts belong to something else.

Both are single afternoons' work for anyone with the volumes. Neither has been done here, and the reading above should be treated as a proposal awaiting them.

The Question That Would Settle It

The productive question is not what the shafts resemble but whether the sign has a **reading**. If the couchant lioness with shafts carries a phonetic or ideographic value in the Early Dynastic sign-lists, that value will state what the object is.

Three resources would answer it. Kaplony's Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit catalogues the Early Dynastic sign corpus. Kahl's sign list for Dynasties 0–3 is the most extensive compiled. And Regulski's Database of Early Dynastic Inscriptions, assembled at Münster from over four thousand inscriptions between tomb U-j and Djoser, is searchable by sign and by reign and is freely accessible. None has been consulted for this study, and the question is left open in the form in which it should be asked.

Weill's Reading: The Shafts as Reeds

Emery's verdict of 1939 — that the lioness with the bent bars 'so far has no explanation' — was overtaken twenty-two years later, and the fact does not appear to have been noticed since. Weill offered an explanation in 1961, and it is not a reading of the sign as a goddess at all.

In the chapter headed Les noms à la hache: constructeur, architecte, sculpteur, Weill treats the whole group — axe, lioness, implanted stem — as a single complex ideogram spelling one word:

> *…le vieil idéogramme déjà complexe de la lionne à la queue allongée portant sur son dos, implantée, la tige rompue au milieu — mr·tj, 'chapelle en branchage tressé', 'constructeur d'édifices en branchage taillé et tressé'… il faut lire mr.tj et comprendre le mot en adjectif masculin, 'celui des chapelles de roseaux mr·tj', plus précisément, d'après le déterminatif supérieur, celui qui coupe, taille les constructions de ce genre.*

On this reading the sign is an occupational title: **he of the reed chapels**, he who cuts and works constructions of that kind. The tige rompue is a cut branch because the word is about cutting branches. The shafts are reeds, and Weill says so directly — elsewhere in the same passage he describes the composers mounting 'sveltes assemblages de tiges verticales', slender assemblages of vertical stems, on the animal's back, which they could do where they could not perch a massive chapel there.

He then states the consequence for the goddess reading, and states it flatly:

> *Quant à la lionne du groupe que nous analysons, porte-t-elle donc le nom de mr·tj ? On ne connaît point de lionne ainsi appelée, mais dans la langue classique la désignation générique du lion est mæj, mæj·t pour la lionne…*

No lioness is known by that name. Weill's conclusion is that the animal and the building are graphically the same thing — 'la lionne et la chapelle sont, graphiquement, la même chose' — because their names were homophones, and that the composers fused the two signs to solve a problem of draughtsmanship. On his account the poles are not Mehit's diagnostic. They are what makes the sign not a goddess.

Two Readings of One Object

This is not a footnote to the identification. It is a competing reading of the same object, by a scholar of standing, and it must be set out plainly.

Weill's cylinder b is Abydos, reign of Djer, Royal Tombs II pl. XVI, impressions 115, 116 and 117. Wilkinson's cited example for Mehit is Petrie 1901, pl. XVI.116. **They are looking at the same sealing.** One reads it as a phonetic writing of a builder's title; the other as the emblem of a lioness goddess.

Nor is Weill consistent with himself. De Wit reports him reading the animal before the pr-wr as Matit in his Monuments des IIe et IIIe dynasties and Monuments nouveaux des premières dynasties; Emery in 1939 cites him to the same effect. By 1961 he reads it as mr.tj, a word, and denies that any lioness bears the name — while, on the same page 91, listing the plain couchant lioness without shafts as the determinative of Mḥyt of Thinis and Sebennytos, Matit of Deir el-Gebrawi, Pakhet, and a certain Mnt. **The distinction he draws is between the lioness with shafts and the lioness without them.**

That distinction is between two forms of the sign, not between a goddess and no goddess, and it is the key to what Weill's reading does and does not reach.

What Weill Explains, and What the Identification Rests On

Weill explains **the shafts**. They are cut reeds because the word he reads is about cutting reeds — mr.tj, 'he of the reed chapels', 'he who cuts and works constructions of that kind'. That is a genuine explanation of the one element of the emblem that has none elsewhere, and it is credited here as the standing account.

But it does not remove the lioness from the sign. It makes her the phonetic vehicle. Weill reconstructs an archaic word for lioness, mrj.t, degenerating later into classical mæj.t, and it is that lioness-word which is used syllabically to write the chapel. He describes the composers as unable to perch the massive chapel on the animal's back or to seat the lioness on its sloping roof, and so accomplishing 'la surprenante invention d'identifier, graphiquement, l'animal et la construction ensemble' — identifying the animal and the building together. On his own account the sign contains a lioness; it has to, or there is no phonetic value with which to write the chapel.

And the identification argued in the main paper does not rest on the shafted sign in any case. It rests on three things Weill leaves untouched: the written title ḥqꜣ Mḥyt, which he himself records as attested in the Third and Fourth Dynasties; the **plain** couchant lioness, which he assigns on the same page to Mehit of Thinis and Sebennytos among others; and the cult geography at Thinis and Hierakonpolis. What his reading forbids is treating the shafted cylinder sign as settled evidence for the goddess. That prohibition is accepted here.

The Two Readings as One Event

There is a further observation, offered as such. Weill's mr.tj is an occupational title: he of the reed chapels, he who cuts and works constructions of that kind. On the framework proposed in this series that is not a rival to the goddess but the corridor arrival stated as an office — a people who build in cut and woven branchwork, arriving at the Nile, whose guardian lies beside the reed shrine they raise. The builder and the lioness beside the pr-wr would then be the same event recorded from two sides: the work and its protector.

This is an interpretation and is not required by anything in Weill. What can be said without it is narrower and holds regardless: the shafts are his, the lioness is not removed by him, and the identification stands on the title, the determinative and the cult centres.

That distinction, if it holds, cuts against any use of the shafted sign as evidence for Mehit, and the earlier passages of this addendum should be read in its light. It does not touch the identification argued in the main paper, which rests on the written title ḥqꜣ Mḥyt on the Wepemnefret slab stela — a separate object, a separate script, and read without hesitation by Der Manuelian.

Two observations survive Weill's reading and are worth keeping. Emery's reduction sequence is unaffected: three or four shafts in the First Dynasty, one by the Third, thereafter with the axe. And Weill's own account makes the shafts **reeds** — stripped, cut plant stems — which is the same class of object the four descriptive authorities converge on, and which sits in the same family as the prepared cult-pole. What changes is what the reeds are doing: on Weill they spell a chapel rather than mark a goddess.

The Character of the Corridor Feline

The reading proposed above turns on a contrast of posture. That contrast can be stated more precisely than 'active', and one control makes it considerably stronger.

The British Museum's description of the Messak 'Fighting Cats' records **two confronted, long-tailed figures standing on their hindquarters, with legs and arms partially outstretched against each other, as if fighting**. The engraving is of exceptional technical quality, with deeply outlined and polished bodies and carved cupules in the heads to represent eyes. And one detail is deliberate: **claws were also marked, maybe to reinforce the idea of fighting**.

Marked claws are the diagnostic of the active Egyptian feline. Weill describes Mafdet as redoubtable for her claws, consort of a falcon whose own epithet is 'Griffu', the clawed one; the 'claws of Mafdet' survive as a named weapon into the Amduat. The corridor's most celebrated feline image and the Egyptian goddess of the active strand are distinguished by the same feature.

The control is the more important finding. It might be objected that Saharan rock art simply renders animals in motion, and that the absence of a couchant feline reflects convention rather than meaning. It does not. Of the Round Head paintings of the Tassili, the British Museum

records that the majority of animal depictions are mouflon and antelope, and that these are **represented only in static positions and not as part of a hunting scene**.

Static depiction was therefore available to these artists and was used — for prey animals. The felines are not rendered static. The distinction between active and couchant in the corridor record is specific to the animal, not imposed by the style. That is what the sequence proposed here requires, and it is not an artefact of how Saharan artists drew.

The Corridor Record: An Active Feline

The Saharan corridor has a long and datable tradition of feline imagery. Its character is consistent, and it is not the character of the Egyptian sign.

At the Messak Settafet, the engravings include the 'Fighting Cats' of Wadi Mathendous, among the most reproduced images in Saharan rock art (Le Quellec 1993; British Museum African Rock Art documentation). At Wadi Sura in the Gilf Kebir, the Cave of Beasts holds some eight thousand figures including numerous hybrid creatures, the 'headless beasts' with feline bodies and raised tufted tails (Kuper 2013; Förster, Riemer and Kuper 2012). The Round Head horizon of the Acacus and Tassili is the earliest painted complex in the central Sahara.

Its dating is contested by roughly two millennia and should be cited with that stated. Le Quellec's synthesis places the beginning of the Round Head period around 5500 BCE, following a low chronology. Soukopova and others place it at 9500–7500 BP, and Mori and Jelinek in the tenth millennium BP. No figure in this range should be presented as settled.

The felines in this record are overwhelmingly **active** — standing, springing, confronted, hunting, or composite. Repeated searching of the published corridor material has produced no couchant guardian lioness of the Egyptian type.

Reading the Distribution as a Sequence

That distribution has been treated in the foregoing as an absence. It is better read as a stage.

The corridor record is not missing the couchant lioness in the way a defective sample is missing something. It carries a feline of a different character, consistently, across every node and every horizon for which imagery survives: the hunter, the fighter, the animal in struggle. That is the feline of a population in motion through an aridifying landscape — one contending with predators, with competition for water, and with other people moving under the same pressure.

The couchant form is what the same animal becomes when the movement stops. A reclining guardian requires something to guard: a threshold, a shrine, a place that will still be there next season. It is a posture that presupposes settlement. On this reading the two forms are not rival identifications of one image but successive expressions of one inheritance under changed conditions — the active feline of the migration, and the couchant feline of the terminus.

Read that way, the negative findings are not obstacles to the corridor model but consistent with it. The distinction matters, and the reading should not be allowed to absorb any result. What is proposed is a mechanism — that a couchant guardian presupposes something to guard, and therefore a settled place — and a mechanism can fail. It predicts that the couchant form should not appear in the rock art of the journey itself; that it should not appear on the Naqada II boat standards; and that it should appear first at the Nile Valley terminus, beside a shrine. All three hold on the present evidence. It predicts equally that a couchant guardian feline should not be found in any pre-settlement Saharan context, and that one might be found in a settled Saharan

context: Nabta Playa is settled, and the feline is absent there, which the reading survives but did not require. A couchant guardian in a pre-settlement corridor site would count against it.

The active strand, meanwhile, is not lost at unification. It survives in Mafdet: clawed, judicial, punitive, described by Weill as a panthère and consort of the clawed falcon at Antaeopolis, and shown on the Den vase surmounting the edifice rather than lying beside it. That the active feline is **named later** than the couchant one — Mafdet under Den, while the couchant sign is already current under Aha — is not a difficulty. Naming order at unification tracks the emerging state's requirements, not the age of the image.

This is an interpretation of a distribution, offered as such. It is not a documented transmission, and the objections set out below stand unaltered. Its merit is that it requires nothing those objections deny: no fourth-millennium contact with the far desert, and no surviving couchant image in the corridor.

The Specialist Objections

Two specialists have addressed the transmission question directly and answered it in the negative. Kuper, editor of the definitive Wadi Sura volume, writes:

> *In light of this new evidence, it appears highly speculative that a direct link exists between the cultural concepts displayed in the imagery of Wadi Sura and those of the Nile Valley cultures.*

Huyge notes that the headless beasts and swimmers show unique imagery, lacking parallels elsewhere in North Africa. Hendrickx, Förster and Eyckerman are more specific still, responding to the suggestion that Predynastic rock art originates in the western desert:

> *le hiatus chronologique est trop important et il n'y a pas d'arguments archéologiques pour des contacts avec le désert lointain pendant le 4e millénaire. Ceci ne contredit de toute évidence pas l'aridification du désert au 5e millénaire et la concentration du peuplement vers la vallée du Nil.*

That is a narrow objection, and its scope should be read exactly. What is denied is continuing contact in the fourth millennium, and therefore a continuous iconographic chain. What is granted is the aridification and the movement of people. The reading proposed above asserts the second and does not require the first: it holds that a population carried a disposition toward the feline, not that images were transmitted along a route that remained open.

The Predynastic Standards

If the lioness is not in the corridor record, the shafts might still be. Poles bearing emblems are one of the best-documented features of Predynastic iconography.

On Naqada II Decorated Ware, boats carry a pair of cabins or portable shrines, and atop the first is a pole bearing a standard, often with streamers. These are the 'cult-signs' of the older literature. Newberry catalogued 159 such vases in 1913; Aksamit's revision lists 238 vases and twenty-eight distinct standard forms (Aksamit 2006, 557–592).

Two things in that catalogue bear on this study.

— **The commonest forms are abstract.** Aksamit: 'A zigzag, bent in both directions, is definitely the most frequently occurring standard, followed by "hills" in all variants (2 to 5

triangles) and “horns”.’ Graff describes the insignia in the same terms — le plus souvent abstrait.

— **No felid appears among them.** Not in de Morgan’s list of 1897, Loret’s of 1904, Foucart’s of 1905, Newberry’s thirteen forms, Petrie’s thirty-two, Göttlicher-Werner’s, or Aksamit’s twenty-eight. The single animal ever classified as a standard was a goat, which Aksamit removes: it was not a standard at all, but an animal standing on a boat cabin.

The wider painted repertoire agrees. Graff’s catalogue of some 650 Naqada I–II vessels lists humans, addax, ibex, gazelle, ovicaprines, hippopotamus, crocodile, dog, deer, bovid, canid, ostrich, giraffe and elephant, together with plants, boats, power sticks and animal skins stretched on sticks. Felines do not appear, in any of her three publications on the material.

On the sequence proposed above, this is again what should be expected. The Decorated Ware repertoire is a Nile Valley visual language of the later fourth millennium, and the couchant guardian has not yet been formed at the point it records. What the standards do carry is divinity. Newberry read them as emblems of proto-nomes; Steindorff contested this in 1909 on the ground that the earliest nome list is Fifth Dynasty and there is no evidence for nome formation before the Old Kingdom; Helck and Baumgartel concurred. As Aksamit summarises the position: ‘the alternative idea, that the standards should rather be regarded as symbols of divinities, is usually accepted to this day.’

So the class of object on Mehit’s back had been carrying gods for five hundred years before she appears. The object is inherited. The animal, in this posture, is new.

One further detail is worth recording. On the Louvre palette fragment, five divine ensigns have their shafts terminating at the lower end in human hands gripping a rope — ‘pour exprimer qu’elles sont animées et agissantes’, to show that they are animate and acting (Weill 1961). The standard is not merely a marker. It is a thing that acts.

The Feline Along the Corridor, Node by Node

The sequence proposed above can be set against the published record node by node. The table below records what the imagery of each corridor site contains, so far as it has been published, together with the confidence attaching to its dating and to the source. It is not a record of transmission; it is a record of what survives, arranged in the order of the corridor.

Node	Site	Feline present	Character	Other principal fauna	Dating	Source
1	El Rhallaouiya, Adrar	Yes	félins among wild fauna	cattle, ostrich, giraffe, antelope, rhinoceros, elephant	Neolithic to pastoral; loose	Vernet 1996; Vernet, Al-Wassit 19
1	El Beyyed, Adrar	Probable	‘peut-être un félin’ on a complex panel	cattle, giraffe, ostrich, horses	mixed, to Libyco-Berber	Vernet, Al-Wassit 19
1	Agrour Amogjar, Adrar	Yes	naturalistic wild fauna	rhinoceros, elephant, giraffe, crocodile, cattle, dancer frieze	pastoral onward; loose	Vernet 2006
2	Tassili n'Ajjer	Yes	active	mouflon and antelope dominant, rendered **static**	Round Head; contested by c. 2,000 yrs	British Museum; Soukopova 2011
3	Tadrart Acacus	Yes	active	Wild Fauna engravings; hunting, pastoralism, dance	engravings to c. 12,000 BP	British Museum

Node	Site	Feline present	Character	Other principal fauna	Dating	Source
4	Messak Settafet	Yes	**confronted, upright, claws marked**	elephant, rhinoceros, bubalus	c. 4250 BCE (Le Quellec)	British Museum; Le Quellec 1993
5	Wadi Sura, Gilf Kebir	Yes	**hybrid** — headless beasts, feline bodies, tufted tails	swimmers, hand stencils, c. 8,000 figures	c. 6500–4400 cal BC	Kuper 2013; Förster, Riemer & Kuper 2012
6	Nabta Playa	No	—	cattle cult, megalithic alignments	c. 4800–3600 BCE	Malville et al. 2008
7	Hierakonpolis	Yes	**couchant**, beside the pr-wr	HK6 cat burials; Tomb 100 lion attacking men	cylinders of Aha and Djer, Dyn. I	Emery 1939; Weill 1961; Smith 1963

Read across the Character column. The feline is present at six of the eight sites and its character is consistent for five of them: active, confronted, hunting, or composite. It changes exactly once, at the last node, where it lies down beside a shrine.

Three cautions, without which the table would mislead.

— **The Adrar record is unevenly published.** About thirty rock-art sites are known in the massif and few have been studied. El Rhallaouiya, the richest engraving site in Mauritania, was published in part in 1996 and is still being documented; its material spans ancient wild fauna, the pastoral period, and later chariots and metal weapons. Amogjar, the richest painted site, was found in 1954 and not published until 2006. Felines are recorded at both, and probably at El Beyyed. What is absent from all of them is the couchant form.

— **Dating confidence varies enormously.** Wadi Sura is radiocarbon-anchored; the Round Head horizon is contested across two millennia; the Adrar material is dated only as 'Neolithic' or 'pastoral onward'. No inference should rest on the Adrar chronology.

— **Absence in the table means absence from the publications consulted**, not absence from the sites. The British Museum notes that study of Mauritanian rock art 'has not been comprehensive', and about thirty Adrar sites are known of which few are published.

One control deserves emphasis because it removes the obvious objection. It might be supposed that Saharan artists simply drew animals in motion, and that the absence of a couchant feline reflects convention. The Tassili Round Head paintings show otherwise: their animal subjects are predominantly mouflon and antelope, and these are **rendered static**. Static depiction was available and was used — for prey. The feline was not drawn that way until the Nile.

A complementary line of evidence sits in Paper III of this series, which tabulates the animals held captive and buried at HK6 — baboon, elephant, aurochs, crocodile, leopard and cat — against the deities each is later associated with, and which notes the same chronological gap addressed here: that between the HK6 cat burials of c. 3800–3600 BCE and the earliest feline deities of the First Dynasty. That table concerns captive animals at the corridor's terminus; the table above concerns depicted animals along its length. They are independent bodies of evidence bearing on one question.

Mehit's Own Geography

Cult Centres: Hierakonpolis and Thinis. Her cult centres are Hierakonpolis and Thinis (Emery 1961, Archaic Egypt, Penguin, p. 125; Wilkinson 1999, p. 250, who describes her as associated with Hierakonpolis and, primarily, Thinis — rendered 'This' in his text). De Wit independently

places her at Thinis, or more precisely at Meshayikh, as the consort of Onuris, and records the epithet ‘Mehit, la maîtresse de This, résidant en la Behedet (orientale)’ — Mehit, mistress of Thinis, residing in the eastern Behedet — an identification Cauville confirms, equating Behedet-the-Eastern with Naga el-Meschayik (1982, p. 116) — citing Junker, Onurislegende, pp. 49, 50 and 56 (de Wit 1951, pp. 287, 300).

Mehit in the Western Desert. The most direct evidence that Mehit’s cult travelled a desert route, however, comes from the Western Desert itself. Darnell, Klotz and Manassa record Mehit among the visiting deities in the decoration of Hibis Temple in Kharga Oasis — at Hibis III, plates 31 (as Hathor-Mehyt), 52 and 57 — identifying her as ‘the lion-goddess Mehyt of Nag‘ el-Mesheyekh’, which is the Meshayikh of de Wit’s account. They explain her presence there, alongside Shu-Onuris of Thinis, as reflecting ‘the importance of the Girga road connecting Abydos and Thinis to Kharga’ (2013, in C. Thiers, ed., Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives 2, CENiM 8, pp. 1–31, at p. 4 and n. 24). Their study documents the general phenomenon: deities of the Nile Valley ‘literally colonizing the temples at the other end of a route’, with the visiting divinities at oasis temples revealing ‘both the origins of local theology and the desert routes connecting the outposts to Egypt proper’. Two further points from the same study bear on the present argument. The Girga road is documented archaeologically from the Thirteenth Dynasty onward and its pharaonic origins are established. And festivals of the solar eye goddess are noted as having ‘led Egyptians into the desert hinterlands of their Nilotic and Oasian homes’. Mehit is therefore attested in the Western Desert, at the far end of a documented desert road running to her own Nile Valley cult centre, in a peer-reviewed study whose subject is precisely the movement of Egyptian deities along such roads. This is an east-to-west attestation along a different route from the one proposed here, and it does not by itself establish a western origin for the goddess; what it establishes is that the mechanism this framework depends upon — lioness cults transmitted between the Nile Valley and the Sahara along desert tracks — is documented rather than hypothetical.

The Weighting of the Two Centres. The relative weighting of these two cult centres is itself informative for the corridor model. Hierakonpolis lies in the third Upper Egyptian nome, far to the south; Thinis lies some two hundred kilometres downstream, and correspondingly closer to Giza. On Wilkinson’s ordering the cult is secondary at the southern site and primary at the northern one. That is the distribution a northward-moving population would be expected to leave behind: the cult attested at the point of entry into the Nile Valley, and more strongly established at the later stage of the same movement. The inference is this paper’s own and is not drawn by Wilkinson or de Wit — exactly the corridor sites documented in Papers I–III.

Mehit's attributes, as documented in mainstream Egyptological sources, map onto the Zep Tepi corridor framework at three independent levels. Geographically: her primary cult centres are Hierakonpolis and Thinis (Wilkinson 1999) — Hierakonpolis being Node 7 of the corridor, the primary Shemsu Hor integration site documented in Paper III, and Thinis being the Thinite capital geographically between Hierakonpolis and Giza. Critically, neither cult centre is Giza. The goddess's cult persisted at the corridor sites where the builders came from; the monument at Giza was left without custodians when the Shemsu Hor horizon dissolved into the consolidating state. This is precisely what the Predynastic model predicts: the builders had a cult at their origin and corridor sites, but no institutional apparatus at Giza to maintain what they had built there. The absence of a Giza Sphinx cult through the entire Old Kingdom is the institutional signature of a monument whose builders left — not of a monument whose builders never existed. The goddess's own cult geography traces the corridor. Mythologically: Mehit is a Nubian lioness brought northward into Egypt by Onuris, the 'bringer-back of the distant one' — a warrior-hunter god whose name encodes the act of retrieving a southern lioness and bringing her north. Her origin myth is the mythological encoding of a south-to-north journey of a lion cult:

the narrative parallel to the corridor migration documented in Papers I–III. Etymologically: Mehit's name derives from the Egyptian root mḥ meaning 'to fill' or 'to make full' — a term specifically used for the restoration of the Wedjat, the Eye of Horus (Erman and Grapow, Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, Wb II: 119–120; Coptic mouḥ; Pinch 2002, Handbook of Egyptian Mythology, pp. 164, 177). Mehit thus means 'she who restores the Wedjat.' The Wedjat is the central cosmological framework of Paper II of this series; its 1/4 fraction corresponds to the equinoctial azimuth of 90° east. The Sphinx faces 90° east — the equinoctial sunrise. The monument that faces the Wedjat orientation is named after Wedjat restoration. The convergence of the name's etymology, the monument's orientation, and the corridor cosmological framework is the philological core of this identification.

The Wider Fauna: Corridor Animals That Became Gods

The feline is one animal among several. Setting it beside the others makes clear that the sequence traced in this addendum is not peculiar to the lioness: animals depicted in the corridor's westernmost rock art recur in the Egyptian painted record, and several of them become gods at the moment writing arrives to name them.

The columns are drawn from three sources, each read for this study. The Adrar column is Vernet's published corpus of the El Rhallaouiya engravings, supplemented by his account of the Amogjar paintings. The Naqada column is Graff's catalogue of some 650 painted vessels of Naqada I–II. The sign column is Gardiner's sign list. **No arrow is drawn between the columns beyond this: the animal is depicted there, and this is what the sign for it means here.**

Animal	Adrar (Vernet)	Naqada I–II (Graff)	Egyptian sign (Gardiner)	Deity
Cattle	yes, abundant	yes (bovid)	E1 bull, kḥ	**Bat**, later Hathor — emblem attested Naqada IC–IIA
Crocodile	yes (Amogjar)	yes	I3, msḥ; jty 'monarch'	**Sobek** — kingship and the Nile
Hippopotamus	**no**	yes	E25, db	**Taweret**
Lion, standing	yes (Amogjar, El Rhallaouiya)	**no**	E22, mǣi 'lion'	**Mafdet** — active, clawed, judicial; named under Den
Lion, recumbent	**no**	**no**	**E23**, rw; rwty 'the Two-lion-god'; rwyt 'gate'	**Mehit** — couchant, beside the pr-wr; sign current under Aha

Two things are visible here that are not visible in any single column.

— **Egypt writes the two lions as two signs.** Gardiner gives E22 for the lion and E23 for the recumbent lion, with different values: mǣi for the one, rw for the other — and with the recumbent form carrying rwty, the Two-lion-god, and rwyt, **gate**. The distinction between standing and couchant is not an interpretation imposed on the material. It is lexical, and in Egyptian the couchant lion means threshold.

— **One row is empty on both sides of the corridor.** The recumbent lion is absent from the Adrar, absent from the Naqada I–II repertoire, and present in Egypt only once writing exists to record it — which is what the sequence proposed in this addendum predicts.

The Animals That Did Not Become Gods

Not every animal of the corridor made the same journey, and the exceptions are as informative as the rule.

— **The ostrich became an object rather than a god.** It is abundant in the Adrar engravings and present at Naqada. Gardiner records it at G34, niw ‘ostrich’ — but also at **S35, the fan of ostrich feathers, ideogram for šwt ‘shade’ and šwyt ‘(military) standard’.** An animal of the western corridor supplies the Egyptian sign for the very class of object that rises from Mehit’s back. The pole tradition and the corridor fauna are not separate inheritances.

— **The giraffe became a verb.** Gardiner E27, determinative in sr ‘foretell’ — a connection he himself records as holding ‘for unknown reason’. Present in the Adrar and at Naqada; no deity.

— **The elephant became a place.** Gardiner E26, æbw ‘elephant’ and semi-phonetic in æbw, ‘Elephantine’. Present in both corpora; no deity.

— **The oryx and antelope remained fauna.** Gardiner E28, mæ-ḥd. Abundant in the Adrar, abundant at Naqada, and later drawn into Sethian and desert associations, but carrying no deity of their own.

— **The panther supplied a garment.** Gardiner E24, æby ‘panther’, ‘leopard’; probably present at El Beyyed, absent from the Naqada painted repertoire, and known chiefly from the leopard-skin of the sem-priest.

— **The rhinoceros did not travel at all.** It is present in the Adrar engravings, absent from the Naqada I–II repertoire, and absent from the Egyptian sign list. It is the one animal of the western corridor that leaves no trace in Egypt — a useful control on any assumption that everything depicted in the Sahara found its way into Egyptian religion.

A caution on the sign column. Gardiner’s list records how signs were used in Middle Egyptian; it is not a statement about Predynastic meaning, and no claim is made here that a corridor artist intended anything a scribe later wrote. What it shows is which animals the Egyptian writing system found worth a sign, and what it made them mean.

The Same Repertoire at Both Ends

A second comparison follows from the same material, and it is the more surprising of the two.

Vernet’s corpus at El Rhallaouiya, at the western origin of the corridor, comprises cattle, ostrich, giraffe, antelope, rhinoceros and elephant, together with felines. Graff’s catalogue of some 650 Naqada I–II painted vessels, at the eastern terminus some four thousand kilometres away and two millennia later, comprises addax, ibex, gazelle, ovicaprines, hippopotamus, crocodile, dog, deer, bovid, canid, ostrich, giraffe and elephant.

Cattle, ostrich, giraffe, antelope and elephant occur in both. The difference is the feline: present in the Adrar engravings and paintings, **absent from the entire Naqada I–II painted repertoire**. The animal that the corridor’s westernmost sites depict is the one the Nile Valley’s painted tradition does not.

This is offered as an observation about two published repertoires, not as evidence of contact. What it establishes is narrower and more useful: that the feline’s absence from the Predynastic Egyptian painted record is not an Egyptian peculiarity. The animal is scarce in the surviving imagery at both ends of the route, and prominent at neither — until it appears at the First Dynasty, reclining, poled, beside a shrine, and named.

The Pattern: Image Before Name

The Mehit identification would be a strained claim if it were unique. It is not. Across the deities attested to the end of the Fourth Dynasty, the same sequence recurs wherever both ends can

be dated: **the image is present and diagnosable before any name attaches to it, and the name arrives with writing.**

Deity	Diagnostic image	Image first attested	Name first attested	Interval	Basis
Bat	frontal human face, bovine ears, inward-curving horns	Naqada IC–IIA, Hierakonpolis Tomb 16	Old Kingdom texts	c. 700+ years	Fischer 1962; Hendrickx 2005
Neith	two click beetles flanking crossed arrows on a pole	crossed-arrow standards, Naqada II Decorated Ware	bilobate cult-sign, Horus Aha	c. 300–500 years	Hendrickx 1996
Mehit	couchant lioness, 3–4 shafts, beside the pr-wr	cylinders of Aha and Djer, Dynasty I	ḥqꜣ Mḥyt, Dynasties III–IV	c. 300–400 years	Weill 1961; Emery 1939; Smith 1963
Mafdet	panther/feline, active, clawed, on a standard	alabaster jar, reign of Den	Palermo Stone year-entry, reign of Den	contemporaneous	Weill 1961; Palermo Stone; Reader 2026 fig. 13.9
Bastet	lioness-headed female	stone vessels, Dynasty II, Saqqara	same vessels	contemporaneous	standard

Read down the Interval column. Bat's emblem exists some seven centuries before her name is written. Neith's crossed arrows sit on Naqada II pottery before the bilobate sign is assembled under Aha. Mehit's couchant lioness is on cylinders under Aha and Djer before ḥqꜣ Mḥyt is written in the Third Dynasty. **In none of the three does the name come first.**

The two remaining rows are the informative exceptions. Mafdet's image and name are **contemporaneous**: the alabaster jar showing her on a standard and the Palermo Stone entry recording the dedication of her image both belong to the reign of Den. Bastet's name appears on the very vessels that carry her image. Neither is a case of naming preceding depiction; they are cases of the two arriving together, which is what should be expected of deities whose emblems were formed after writing was already in use.

What the table deliberately omits. Matit and Pakhet share Mehit's couchant sign, and an earlier draft of this study listed them with the Dynasty I cylinders as their first attested image. That was circular: the cylinders are assigned to Mehit by Weill, and attributing the same image to the other sign-sharers assumes the identification at issue. Horus and Seth were likewise omitted, not because the pattern fails for them but because the attestations available to this study are not of a standard that would allow the rows to be defended. A pattern demonstrated on three well-documented cases is worth more than one padded to nine.

The Later Theology, and Why It Is Kept Separate

The material below is Ptolemaic and New Kingdom. It documents Mehit's cult richly, but it postdates the First Dynasty sign by two millennia or more, and none of the argument in this addendum rests on it. It is set out here, apart from the early evidence, so that the two are not confused.

The Returning Eye. Her mythology connects her to the returning Eye and the restoration of cosmic order. Mehit is one of the goddesses identified with the lion form of the Eye of Ra (Pinch 2002, Handbook of Egyptian Mythology, ABC-CLIO). This identification is independently confirmed by Reemes (2015), who, describing an offering scene on the upper register of the eastern interior enclosure wall at Edfu, records 'a seated, leontocephalic image of the local goddess Mehit' and states that 'like the fiery Eye of Re and Sekhmet, with both of whom she is

iconographically and theologically related, Mehit could be a fierce and destructive deity' (2015, Chapter 1, citing Chassinat, Le temple d'Edfou VI (1931), p. 313, and plates vol. X (1928), pl. 150). In the scene she receives the king's offering and declares: 'I have received your work of slaying foes… I have given to you your rebels bound to poles; your conspiring enemies, they do not exist.' Cauville's appendix (1982, pp. 121–125) catalogues the Mehyt passages across the great Ptolemaic temples.

The Edfu Corpus. The catalogue includes Edfou I, 315 and Edfou I, 574, together with attestations at Dendera and Kom Ombo and their absence at Philae. The protection triad is at Edfou I, 315, where her flame 'consumes the enemies of Re, calcines the opponents of Horus, and roasts the adversaries of Osiris'. Further epithets reported from the Edfu corpus describe her as 'mistress of carnage, but who loves joy, mistress of terror, but who loves to be appeased' (Edfou IV, 116) and record that 'her rage is joyous' (Edfou II, 106); she is named among four uraei alongside Menhyt, Sekhmet and Nephthys, and is said sometimes to bear the sign of the wedjat above her head. Three independent sources — Cauville, Gamelin and Reemes — therefore place Mehit within the Eye of Ra complex and in the role of destroying the enemies of the king and of Ra, Horus and Osiris. On the etymology, see the discussion of competing readings below; 'the completed one' is one proposal among several and is not adopted here as settled. In the Onuris myth she is the Distant Goddess brought back from Nubia; in a later, syncretic reading she is linked to the full moon and to the returned lunar Eye of Horus, whereby cosmic balance is restored (Pinch 2002, pp. 164, 177; Junker 1917, Die Onurislegende). Pinch presents this lunar Eye-of-Horus identification as a late development rather than Mehit's original meaning, a caveat this paper adopts.

The Cult at Edfu Confirmed. That she held a cult at Edfu at all is confirmed independently of the hymn. Kurth, who directs the Edfu Project, lists the deities venerated in the temple beside Horus Behedeti, Hathor of Dendera and Harsomtus — Isis, Nephthys and Osiris, Re, Ptah, Khonsu, Min, Khnum and Mehit — alongside a cult for the royal ancestors (Kurth 1999, in Bard 1999). Mehit is therefore named in the standard reference among the gods worshipped at Edfu, which places the hymn quoted above within an attested cult rather than an isolated text. This role is attested in Mehit's own cult: the hymn to Mehyt at the Temple of Horus at Edfu presents her as a form of the Distant Goddess — the daughter of Ra who departs and is returned — with her own chapel there as representative of Abydos, charged with the protection of Osiris, Horus and Ra (Cauville 1982, 'L'hymne à Mehyt d'Edfou', BIFAO 82: 105–125). The chapel had already been set within the temple's theological programme by Cauville (1987, Essai sur la théologie du temple d'Horus à Edfou, Bibliothèque d'Étude 102, at p. 71 fig. 23 and p. 229ff., as cited by Gamelin). The chapel and its texts have since been re-examined by Gamelin, who records that the dedicatory inscriptions identify the room as the 'Behedet of Ra' and that Mehyt's own epithets there include 'celle qui réside dans la Behedet du Sud' — she who resides in the Behedet of the South — together with 'celle qui brûle les opposants de Rê, celle qui embrase les adversaires d'Horus et celle qui consume les ennemis d'Osiris', she who burns the opponents of Ra, sets ablaze the adversaries of Horus and consumes the enemies of Osiris (Gamelin 2012, 'Un assemblage décoratif pour une construction théologique dans la chapelle de Méhyt à Edfou', BIFAO 112: 171–190, at pp. 171, 175 and 177; translations from the French are the author's). Cauville's reading of the hymn identifies Mehyt with Tefnut in the opening line itself, treats her flame as the counterpart of Shu's wind (1982, pp. 106, 117), and discusses her Sekhmet form and the lioness who fled to Nubia within the legend of the Distant One (p. 118). Gamelin likewise notes that Mehyt is 'implicitement assimilée à Tefnout' and that her chapel is distinguished among the radiating chapels of the eastern temple by the representation of a barque belonging to her. The protection triad and the Behedet epithet are therefore independently attested outside Cauville's original study. This grounds the restoration theme in

Mehit's own attestation rather than in the similarly-named cow goddess Mehet-Weret, a distinct deity with whom she should not be conflated.

The Onuris–Mehit pairing is also recorded in the recent literature on the Distant Goddess myth: Barbara Richter (2010, 'On the Heels of the Wandering Goddess: The Myth and the Festival at the Temples of the Wadi el-Hallel and Dendera,' in M. Dolińska and H. Beinlich (eds.), 8. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Beziehungen zwischen Tempeln (Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft Früher Hochkulturen 3.3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 155–186) documents that 'Onuris is attested since the end of the Old Kingdom as the local god of Thinis, appearing with his consort, the lioness-goddess Mehit, in New Kingdom reliefs at Abydos' (Richter 2010, n. 42, citing W. Schenkel, LÄ IV, 573, s.v. Onuris; at pp. 162–167, the pages cited for this material by Darnell, Klotz and Manassa 2013, n. 9; following the foundational monograph on the Onuris mythology: Junker, H. 1917, Die Onurislegende, Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien 59(1/2), Alfred Hölder, Vienna, the primary Egyptological treatment of the Onuris-Mehit tradition cited by Richter herself). This is peer-reviewed mainstream Egyptology, independent of the Zep Tepi Series, attesting the Onuris–Mehit pairing specifically at Thinis — the corridor site the Shemsu Hor are documented as occupying, and the site Wilkinson (1999) and Emery (1961) identify as Mehit's primary cult centre. Rundle Clark (1978, 'Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt,' Thames and Hudson, p. 229), in a foundational Egyptological treatment of Egyptian creation mythology, has been cited for the etymology: Mehit is 'a lioness whose name means she who has been filled.' The specific page reference could not be independently verified from available sources. The etymology is more authoritatively attested in: Erman, A. and Grapow, H. (1926–1961), Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, 7 vols., Berlin: Akademie-Verlag (Wb II: 119–120, entry mḥ, 'to fill,' used specifically in the context of restoring the Wedjat eye), the definitive Egyptian language dictionary; and in Junker, H. (1917), Die Onurislegende, the primary monograph on the Onuris-Mehit tradition — the same mḥ / mouḥ / Wedjat-restoration semantic the present paper documents. Two additional independent Egyptological sources, neither citing the Zep Tepi Series, both attest the Onuris–Mehit pairing and the mḥ / 'filled' etymology at the corridor's primary cult sites. The four-level attestation in this section now has six.

Attributes, Etymology and the Two-Event Check

The Three Pillars, and a Limit on Thinis. One limit on the Thinis evidence should be stated at the outset. The settlement of Thinis, later an important nome capital, has never been located archaeologically; what is known of the site comes from its cemeteries at Naga ed-Deir and from inscriptions naming the town of Tjeni (Bard 1999). Claims about Mehit's cult at Thinis therefore rest on textual and iconographic evidence rather than on excavated cult architecture, and are treated here on that footing. Mehit — of Hierakonpolis and Thinis, consort of Onuris (on whom see Schenkel 1982, Lexikon der Ägyptologie IV, 573–574) — is a distinct deity from the similarly-named Menhit, a Nubian-derived war goddess and consort of Khnum whose cult centre was Esna; the two are occasionally conflated in popular treatments, but every source cited in this paper (Wilkinson, Pinch, Emery, Richter, Junker) refers specifically to Mehit, not Menhit.

The Nekhen Deposit. The context of those objects is itself relevant. Yurco records that the ancient shrine at Nekhen was pre-formal — a raised oval structure with a simple building atop it, the form that came to write the name of Nekhen in hieroglyphs — and that archaic kings from Scorpion to Narmer dedicated palettes, maceheads and other artefacts there. When Tuthmose III built a formal shrine at Nekhen in the New Kingdom, "all the early, archaic dedications to the

shrine were collected and placed in a sealed deposit", which is what Quibell excavated (Yurco 1999, in Bard 1999). The sealings on which Mehit appears therefore come from a body of material deliberately gathered as ancestral and set aside, at the shrine of the falcon god, by a New Kingdom king dealing with monuments already ancient in his own time — the same posture, at the same remove, as Thutmose IV before the Sphinx.

The Contested Etymology. The Edfu hymn describes Mehyt as protecting the swāḏ-ba (Cauville 1982). On one reading, swāḏ-ba contains wāḏ, 'green' or 'healthy', the root of wḏʾ.t, the made-whole Eye of Horus, and Mehyt's own name derives from a root meaning 'to fill' or 'to be complete', hence 'the full one' or 'she who makes full' — a sense used of the making full again of the wedjat (Cauville 1982, BIFAO 82: 105–125). The etymology is contested: de Wit (1951, pp. 300–301) records four competing readings from Brugsch, Sethe and Junker, of which Sethe's 'the full (eye) of the sun' and Junker's reading as the eye of Horus point in this direction while the others do not. The weighting between the two Eyes is likewise contested. Mehyt is associated at least as strongly with the protection of Osiris as with that of Ra, and so with the lunar Eye of Horus as much as with the solar Eye of Ra (de Wit 1951, pp. 300–301; Cauville 1982). The solar reading is adopted here as the one that bears on the monument's orientation, but it is not the only reading available.

The etymological derivation is explicit: the Egyptian root mḥ ("to fill, to make whole, to restore") produces the Coptic mouḥ, and is the technical term used in the phrase mḥ ir(t) 'n 'ir(t) ḥr (mw) — "filling the Eye of Horus" — the canonical formulation for the restoration of the Wedjat after its wounding by Seth. Mehit is the feminine form of this root. It has been read as an active participle, "she who fills" or "she who restores"; Junker reads it as the state rather than the act — die Volle, the Full One — and that is the reading followed here and in the subtitle of the main paper. The distinction is set out below. The identification of Mehet-Weret with the Wedjat is made in the Book of the Dead, Spell 17, and survives in modern translation. Faulkner renders the gloss "As for the Celestial Cow, she is the Sacred Eye of Re", and the Digital Egypt edition, translating independently, gives "As for Mehweret, it means the wedjat-eye of Ra" (Faulkner 1985; Digital Egypt, BD 17). The statement glossed is that the deceased "has seen Ra born yesterday at the buttocks of Mehweret", explained first as "these waters of the sky-flood" and then as "an image of the eye of Ra at dawn when he is born every day". Two points of precision follow from the modern readings. The eye in question is the Eye of Ra, not the Eye of Horus, and the two should not be elided here. And the identification is a gloss within the spell's internal commentary rather than a free-standing statement of doctrine. Mehet-Weret shares the same root mḥ and is identified with the Wedjat. This suggests, but does not prove, that the monument named Mehit was conceptually linked to the Wedjat orientation. The chain from mḥ to Wedjat restoration is secure; the chain from the lioness Mehit to that specific act is supported by the name's etymology and, more weakly, by Spell 17's identification of Mehet-Weret (a cow goddess, not a lioness) with the Wedjat. That second support is retained here only for completeness: Junker's reading, set out below, attaches the Eye to Mḥ.t herself and removes any need to argue through the cow goddess at all. One further detail in the same spell is recorded without being relied upon. In the Digital Egypt translation the Mehweret gloss runs directly into the clause 'because (I am) one of those gods of the following of Horus'. Given the spell's alternation of statement and commentary that clause probably opens the next statement rather than completing this one, and no weight is placed on it here; but šmsw-Ḥr stands in immediate proximity to the wedjat identification in BD 17, and the point should be checked against a full critical edition. The convergence of the name, the equinoctial orientation, and the lioness form remains striking but is presented here as the best current candidate, not as a resolved identification. Three linguistic steps, all from the same root, all converging on the same concept. The relationship between the name and the orientation should be stated exactly, since it is easily misread as circular. The identification of the monument with Mehit is argued in the

main paper from the written title ḥqꜣ Mḥyt at Giza, the couchant determinative, and the cult geography at Thinis and Hierakonpolis. None of those grounds involves the monument's orientation, and the orientation is not offered here as a reason for the name. The orientation is established independently by survey; the etymological chain from mḥ to the filling of the Wedjat is secure from Egyptian sources that say nothing of the Sphinx; and Belmonte's survey of more than 350 temple orientations finds the eighth, quarter and half of the circumference to be the dominant angular increments of Egyptian sacred orientation, which is what places the quarter within Egyptian practice rather than within a modern arithmetic. The convergence of the three is recorded as a convergence and is not used to support any one of them.

Junker on the Name

That gap — between the lioness Mehit and the restoration of the Eye — is closed by the work that first established the Onuris legend. Junker devotes a section of Die Onurislegende to the name itself, and reaches the same reading independently in 1917:

> *Für den Fall, daß Mḥ.t tatsächlich die 'Volle' bedeutet, kann es nicht zweifelhaft sein, daß in erster Linie das volle Horusauge damit in Zusammenhang gebracht werden muß. Denn auch dem Füllen des Auges begegnen wir zuerst und auch später fast ausschließlich in dessen Mythus. Horus hat sein leeres Auge gefüllt mit dem vollen Auge (Pyr. 1682)…*

And his conclusion, which pairs the two names as a single mythic unit:

> *Wenn demnach der Name der Mḥ.t astral zu deuten ist, so muß er, in so früher Zeit entstanden, ohne Frage sich auf das geraubte Auge des Horus beziehen, ebenso wie das Inj ihres Genossen auf das Wiederbringen desselben.*

If the name Mehit is to be read astrally then it must, having arisen so early, refer without question to **the stolen Eye of Horus** — just as the Inj of her companion refers to the bringing back of that same Eye. **Onuris is he who brought the distant one home; Mehit is the Full One.** The pair is the Eye and its restorer.

Two things follow. First, the identification does not depend on Mehet-Weret. Junker attaches the Eye to Mḥ.t herself — the lioness, consort of Onuris at Thinis and Sebennytos — not to the cow goddess of Spell 17, and the objection that Mehet-Weret is bovine therefore does not reach this reading.

Second, the division of agency. Onuris is the one who acts: his name means the bringing back. Mehit **is** the Eye — the Full One, the thing restored rather than the one who restores it. An earlier subtitle of the main paper rendered her as 'she who makes the Eye whole', which gives her the role Junker assigns to her consort; it now reads **Mehit: The Full Eye of Horus**, following the reading set out here.

Junker's immediately preceding section supplies the mechanism from the Pyramid Texts. 'Das Füllen des Auges… ist in den Pyramidentexten nur vom Horusauge zu belegen: "Es füllte Horus sein leeres Auge mit seinem vollen Auge" (Pyr. 1682)'; and 'Das "heile" Auge kann naturgemäß ursprünglich nur das wiederhergestellte Auge des Horus bezeichnen.' He adds that das Füllen des Auges is the festival at Heliopolis, and that **'der das wdȝ.t-Auge füllt' — he who fills the Wedjat eye — is the title borne by the king when he offers the Sacred Eye.**

The Mehit identification also offers a consistency check against the two-event model argued in the main paper on geological and archaeological grounds, and not restated here. That model's

terminus post quem for the face rests on the headdress alone and requires no naming evidence. For the body, the philological evidence is more modest than a constraint: the First Dynasty attestations establish that Mehit's name was already current in administrative and religious use before the Second Dynasty, with the seal impressions of Horus-Narmer placing that usage at the very beginning of the written record. This dates the name itself, not its application to the Giza monument specifically, which remains this paper's proposed identification rather than an independently established fact. What it does show is that the name was already available, at the earliest point writing exists, for a monument whose Predynastic construction date is argued independently elsewhere in this paper — a consistency between the philological and physical evidence, not a separate proof of the body's age. Face after unification, established independently. Body before unification, established independently on geological and archaeological grounds, and not contradicted by the philological evidence presented here.

The convergence structure of this paper has throughout been external to the monument: geology, climate, archaeology, and iconography converging on a Predynastic lion at Giza. Mehit inverts that structure. On this hypothesis, the monument itself — through its proposed preserved name, its documented cult geography, its origin mythology, and its etymological connection to the Wedjat — speaks the same language as the framework that predicted its existence. The Zep Tepi framework was not built to explain Mehit. It was built from corridor geography, genetics, archaeoastronomy, and textual criticism. Mehit was found afterward, in the published literature, by researchers with no connection to this series. That a name found independently in mainstream Egyptology converges this closely with the framework's geography, mythology, and cosmology is not confirmation bias — the search was not constructed to find it. If the identification is correct, it is what Whewell (1840) called the consilience of inductions in its strongest form: a hypothesis proposed to explain one class of facts unexpectedly explaining another, entirely independent class, including the name this paper proposes the Egyptians themselves gave the monument.

What This Does and Does Not Support

It supports the claim that naming is a Nile Valley event occurring at the threshold of writing, and that the absence of a name in earlier periods is not evidence against a deity's antiquity. It supports the legitimacy of identifying unnamed iconography from later attestations, on Fischer's precedent. It supports the distinction between the couchant lioness complex — Mehit, Matit, Pakhet, Mnt — and the active feline Mafdet, on Weill's authority and on the different relation each bears to architecture.

It offers, as an interpretation of the surviving distribution rather than a demonstrated transmission, a reading of the two feline forms as successive rather than rival: the active feline of a population in motion, and the couchant guardian of the same inheritance once the movement ended. On this reading the corridor's consistent activity of posture, and the couchant form's first appearance at the Nile Valley terminus beside a shrine, are a sequence rather than a discontinuity.

It does not support a documented image-lineage from Saharan rock art to the Early Dynastic emblem. No couchant guardian lioness has been found in the corridor. No felid appears among the Predynastic standards. Two specialists deny a demonstrable link on the current evidence, and this study has not overturned them. The sequence proposed here is consistent with their objections but is not established by them.

Nor does it resolve the sign's polyvalence. Weill's couchant lioness determines four goddesses. This study identifies one. The grounds for preferring Mehit are that her cult centres, Hierakonpolis and Thinis, are corridor termini; that she is the earliest of the four to be attested by name, in the Third and Fourth Dynasties, where Matit's Deir el-Gebrawi attestation is Sixth Dynasty and Pakhet's Speos Artemidos Eighteenth; and that only she carries a title into the Giza material through Wepemnefret. Those grounds are stated so that they can be contested.

The position, stated plainly. The corridor carried a disposition toward the feline and a tradition of emblems on poles. Egypt supplied the posture, the shrine, and the name. Mehit's emblem is a composite: an inherited standard, a national sanctuary, and an animal rendered lying down at the moment a moving people stopped moving. It was named when writing arrived, as her contemporaries were.

What Would Resolve This

— **The shafts.** Weill's mr.tj reading is the standing published account and appears to have gone unremarked since 1961; Wilkinson reads the same class of sign as Mehit, from the same sealing. Nobody has adjudicated between them. A study of the shafts on the model of Hendrickx's treatment of Neith's bilobate sign (1996) — which reconstructed that emblem from its components and traced each to its own first attestation — would settle whether they belong to the standard tradition or to something else.

— **Kaplony 1963, Taf. 40–47.** The corpus of Early Dynastic sealings. Three separate questions in this study terminate at this volume: the full attestation list, the holders of ḥqꜣ Mḥyt, and the shafts themselves.

— **Petrie 1901, Royal Tombs II, pl. XVI.** The Djer sealings, nos. 114–117, digitised and freely available. The plates can be examined directly.

— **Wilkinson 1999, p. 250.** The single sentence from which every modern description of the sign derives.

— **Aksamit's plates.** The twenty-eight standard forms are drawn rather than named in the published catalogue text. The plates would confirm the absence of a felid definitively.

Note on Method

This addendum reports negative findings at the same length as positive ones. The absence of a corridor antecedent for the couchant lioness, and the absence of any felid from the Predynastic standard corpus, are stated because they were looked for and not found — and because a reader is entitled to know what a hypothesis has been tested against.

Two specialist objections are quoted in full rather than summarised, and their scope is stated exactly rather than minimised. Where a chronology is contested, the competing figures are given. Where a source has not been consulted directly, that is said.

The Mehit identification proposed in the main paper rests on the philological and cult-geographic evidence set out there — Wepemnefret's title alive in Khufu's court, the Early Dynastic attestation of the name, the cult centres at Thinis and Hierakonpolis, and the pose. It does not rest on corridor transmission of the image, and nothing in this addendum was required to establish it.

What this addendum establishes is narrower and, for the series as a whole, more useful: that the sequence image-then-name is the norm in Early Dynastic Egypt, not the exception, and that

a deity first named in the Third Dynasty whose image is attested in the First is behaving exactly as her contemporaries do.

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